

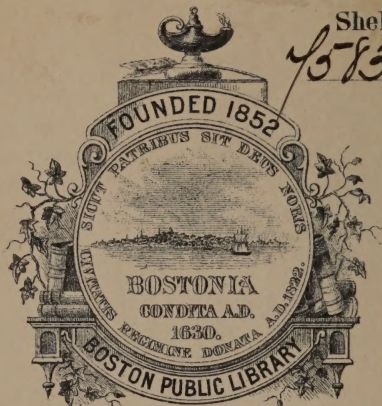
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DR. PEIRSON'S ADDRESS

ON

TEMPERANCE.

1830

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ADDRESS

ON

TEMPERANCE,

DELIVERED IN

THE SOUTH MEETING HOUSE,

Salem,

JANUARY 14, 1830.

BY A. L. PEIRSON, M. D.

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Rev. G. P. Churchard
May 16. 1866

ADDRESS.

IN an age professing to be enlightened, and claiming to have done much to improve the moral and physical condition of man, it may seem strange that the cause of TEMPERANCE should need to be advocated. What! when health and vigor and long life are proffered to us, shall any dissuasion be necessary to prevent us from courting disease, debility, and death? It must be that some widely spread error is at the bottom of so absurd a choice; and that the intoxicating draught has not hitherto been regarded in its true character. And such, we apprehend to be the fact. However well it may have been known to medical men, and those accustomed to watch the operation of physical agents, that strong drink was not productive of strength, the contrary has been the popular doctrine, and, like most popular errors, is advanced by the craftiness of a few who know better, and supported by the ignorant credulity of the multitude, who are ready to espouse any belief which administers to their depraved appetites. The popular delusion which considers strong drink necessary for labor, *must* be dissipated, before temperance will be generally practised among the sons of toil. The great Poet of Nature, who always shows himself an observer, as well of the physical, as the intellectual character of

man, has placed the *true* sentiment into the mouth of the stout old gardener:—

“ Though I look old, yet am I strong and lusty :
 For in my youth I never did apply
 Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood ;
 Nor did not, with unbashful forehead, woo
 The means of weakness and debility :
 Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
 Frosty but kindly.”

As you like it. Act 2. Scene 3.

Whoever in youth will apply “hot and rebellious liquor in their blood,” must expect to reap the harvest of premature old age, and preternatural decay. *This* is the *true* doctrine to be maintained by the friends of temperance; and the opposite, the pernicious error which it is incumbent upon them to oppose. And especially is it incumbent upon those into whose charge is committed the health of their fellow-men, to contradict this error and thereby clear the skirts of *their* garments from the blood of the numberless victims of this false belief. This duty is more imperious upon them, inasmuch as medical opinions, on subjects connected with health, become at length universally adopted as popular opinions. And even medical errors, arising from the many unsound theories which have arisen in medicine, are, at this day, long after the theories which gave rise to them are exploded and forgotten, the source of great perplexity to physicians, and the bane of all sound philosophy and correct reasoning in popular medicine.

Temperance, is moderation in things not hurtful, and abstinence from those which are ; but such has been the power of a single article, and so gigantic its effects, that it has borne the trophies from all the rest, and the name *Intemperance* is now, almost solely applied, to excessive drinking of ardent spirit. This is the demon

which numbers its victims by thousands and tens of thousands; which destroys peace, beggars families, peoples prisons and penitentiaries and almshouses and churchyards. And, if it deserved the execration of *civilized* man for no other reason, is richly entitled to it, for being the principal cause of the annihilation of the aborigines of our country, a race of men, whose faults have been exaggerated, and whose noble qualities have never met with their deserts; and whose mortal remains excite our interest and awaken our sympathies, when, after a lapse of two centuries they are brought to our *view* by the spade or the ploughshare as it passes over the *land* of their ancient dominion.

In speaking of the effects of ardent spirit, I need not paint to you, *minutely*, a picture of ebriety; this, alas! is too well known and familiar. It is in the commencement of a drunken fit, alone, that the votary of Bacchus finds enjoyment: the closing part of it is made up of pain and loathing. The vivid impressions excited in the nervous system, the thrilling of the muscular fibres, the gayety, volubility, and disposition to muscular exertion, is soon succeeded by a painful throbbing of the head and breast, universal flaccidity, and loss of power in the voluntary muscles, destroying the capacity of locomotion and speech, nausea, vomiting, and at last by heavy, unrefreshing sleep. To this succeeds a state of fever with headache,—loaded tongue,—languor and loss of appetite. Fortunate is it for the novitiate in debauchery if these symptoms are severe, or excessive:—they may deter him from a second indulgence. But it too often happens that when nature has succeeded in repairing the injury produced by excess, the lesson is forgotten, the intoxication is repeated, and the stomach, which can ac-

custom itself to almost any stimulus, gets to demand the cup it recently rejected with disgust.

Then commences the life of the dram-drinker. Each night he reels to his bed, with hardly enough of reason to prove his nature superior to that of the brutes, and each morning discovers him, weak, faint, thirsty and tremulous. Then is perceived the watery eye, the fetid breath, the red tongue, the tottering gait, the aching head, the confused intellect, "the remembering a mass of things, but nothing distinctly." The limbs emaciate, the head and body are bloated, and intemperance has affixed marks which the most common observer cannot mistake. A proneness to the shedding of tears, without cause, is among the earliest consequences of the use of strong drink; and a maudlin sensibility and an over-acted and unnatural exhibition of religious sentiments and affections have not unfrequently imposed upon well meaning friends; although to the experienced and observant physician, they would be confirmation strong of any suspicions he might have formed of the individual's habits. But such a course as this, it cannot be expected, can long be maintained, but at the expense of health. And so indeed we find it. For the frequent repetition of a stimulus like ardent spirit, will produce disease as a natural consequence. The powers of the human system are calculated for the regulated action for which the system was intended. If we increase this action, without increasing the power to bear it, the regulated, medium condition, termed health, must be departed from. If a man naturally, and in health, breathe 20 times a minute, he cannot, with impunity, induce a habit of breathing 40 times a minute. If his heart's temperate pulsation is 70 times a minute, he cannot, with impunity, excite it, for a long period, to 120. And yet, the man,

who, every few hours, excites his stomach, with ardent spirit, is inducing greater changes than these, and producing much higher action than natural, without the least positive increase of energy. One thing which exposes him more to the invasion of disease, is, that, according to an observation as old as Hippocrates, the dram-drinker has little or no appetite. Thus the stomach, unoccupied by food, is more exposed to the action of the stimulus, with which it is goaded, and the deleterious effects of the practice, are thereby rendered more rapid and certain. The intemperate man is, no doubt, entitled to the whole catalogue of human diseases, but there are some complaints, which are, more particularly his portion. And among the most important physical effects of intemperance, is the producing of a peculiar state of the nervous system, in consequence of which, any disorder taking place, sufficient to disturb the constitution and produce a feverish state, or any external injury, such as is not usually attended with danger, may produce a disease which is the legitimate and peculiar inheritance of the spirit drinker; and the occurrence of which, is sometimes, the first intimation we have of his habits. It is a mark confidently to be relied upon, since the disease can be produced by no other cause, than the habit of taking stimulating drink. It is a highly dangerous, and often fatal affection, and in order to be produced, it is not necessary that the subject of it should have been excessively debauched. The daily habit of using ardent spirit, in much less quantities than those requisite to destroy the reason, will suffice to bring about this dangerous result. The disorder is termed, in medical phrase, *delirium tremens*, but is far better expressed, by the popular name, a rum fever. It is characterized by a peculiar aberration of mind, and a

wakefulness, which is proof against common remedies in moderate doses, and consists in an affection of the brain and nerves; for the most part a sequel to some other disease, or accident, and which, in a temperate person, would have been devoid of danger. From this source accrues the greatest mortality among the intemperate; and were our bills of mortality always correctly vouched, many cases, now included under the heads of "nervous fever," "brain fever," and even fractures, and other accidents, would be embraced in the more just title of intemperance. And here, if it were proper, I might discuss the catalogue of disease, which intemperance induces, but I am admonished this is not a medical assembly. I may, however, be pardoned if I allude to one of the most lamentable of human infirmities, which is not unfrequently occasioned by the habitual use of spirits. This is insanity, in its various forms. The love of drink, and the proneness to mania, are, with respect to each other, interchangeable causes.

Our sympathy must always be strongly excited for such unfortunate sufferers; for their case is among the most hopeless ones;—for, while their propensities are stronger, their powers of self control are less than in other persons. It requires more than common discrimination to distinguish, between the actions which result from intemperance, and those which are caused by the developement of a latent predisposition to mental derangement.

The persons most exposed to form the habit of drinking spirits, are those whose occupation is laborious, and subjects them to frequent changes of temperature, to watching, fasting, and anxiety of mind:—Certain classes of mechanics and day laborers and seafaring men are of this description. Physicians are peculiarly exposed to

form this dangerous habit, both from the nature of their employment and the pernicious hospitality of their employers. A physician, who had once been respectable, and in very extensive country practice, but who had, in the meridian of life, sacrificed fame and fortune at the shrine of Bacchus, informed me, that he was led to the habit which ruined him, by always meeting at the door of every cabin he entered, some one, holding a bottle and a cup, and saying to him, "Come doctor, now you have been out in the cold or heat, as the case might be, some spirit will do you good." A ceremony which was repeated at going away, so that he drank twice at each visit. The only safe rule for every medical man, who values his health and reputation, and who is aware how insensibly our habits steal upon us, is, never to drink at the houses of his patients, and upon all occasions, of medical intercourse, to refuse the proffer of strong drink. It is a groundless error that ardent spirit is always necessary to be kept in the sick chamber, and this supposed necessity, arises partly from the belief, that the attending physician requires a dram, to refresh him, after the fatigues of his professional duties. It is of immense consequence, for medical men, to convince their employers, of *this* error, and give a practical demonstration of what they profess to teach, that ardent spirit is not a source of strength, but of weakness. The celebrated Mr. John Hunter, took an admirable method of enforcing this important truth. A strong, ruddy faced farmer, had a disease, which induced Mr. Hunter to enjoin total abstinence from fermented liquors. "Sir," said the farmer, "I assure you, I am a very temperate man; I scarcely ever exceed *three pints of ale* in the day, and I never touch spirits." "But," said Mr. Hunter, "you must now drink nothing but water." "Sir,"

said the farmer, "that is impossible, for I cannot relinquish my employment; and you know, sir, it is impossible to work without some support." Mr. Hunter perceiving that his patient was not likely to be readily convinced, inquired how many acres of land he cultivated, and what number of them was arable? He next asked how many horses were employed upon the farm? And then boldly asserted they were too few in number for the quantity of land. The farmer maintained they were sufficient,—but was, at last, brought to confess they *were* worked, rather hard. "Allow me then," said Mr. Hunter, "to ask what it is you give them to drink."*

Education, physical and mental, cannot begin too soon. Nay, it *must* begin with the first breath we draw. For the senses are the only avenues of instruction in the early part of life, and the repeated impressions of external circumstances, create our habits and artificial wants. These habits are our education. Is there no wisdom then in regulating the impressions made on the senses of children? And if so, is not the taste a sense to be *educated* as well as the rest? A child may be made miserable by a fastidious palate, as well as by defective hearing; and if we would accustom children to eat and drink what is proper for them, we never should allow them what is improper. But are these very obvious ideas usually suffered to regulate the physical education of children? Are we not sometimes called upon by fond parents to admire the precocious abilities of the inhabitant of the nursery who has learned to drink healths, at the dinner table, and toss off his glass with the air of a man? The love of liquor is often acquired in early life, even in infancy. The effect of distilled spirit upon

* Hunterian Oration for 1819.

very young subjects, is immediate, and soon occasions sleep; hence it is a favorite prescription with impatient nurses and mothers to still the wailings of their feeble charges. In the crowded population of some of the manufacturing towns of Great Britain it is no uncommon practice for the nurses among the lower classes, to feed children with pure spirits; and, in order to make them love it, the reluctant babes in the first instance, are made to suck the finger dipped in the liquor. It must necessarily result from such a practice, that the foundation is often laid in infancy for habits of intemperance in after life.

If there is anything settled in physical education it is that the drink of childhood should be pure water:—but the indiscretion of parents is continually prompting the appetite of children to crave those stimulants which they had better never learn to love; and, at any rate, the longer their acquaintance with them is postponed, the greater is their chance of escaping the habit of intemperance. This salutary denial of unrequired stimulus, may be advantageously extended beyond the period of childhood. And the presiding authorities of those seminaries of learning to which our youth resort, would do well to attend, in a more particular manner than they were formerly accustomed to do, to the habitual drink of those whose future usefulness, is in a great measure to depend, upon the habits which they form in school and college.* This hint not only applies to heads of colleges and universities, but likewise to mechanics, shipmasters and all those who receive boys as apprentices in any handicraft or laborious employment.

* In my college days the dinner drink of the commons hall was *strong, hard* cider, sufficiently powerful to muddle the brains of experienced toppers. According to Accum, cider contains 9.87 per cent. of alcohol, and is therefore more than a third as strong as Madeira wine, which contains 24.42.

The prevention of intemperance is an important part of the science of physical education, and appeals with irresistible energy to the attention of all those who are concerned in the education of youth, from their earliest infancy. Much may be expected from the prevalence of sound philosophy and common sense in avoiding the exposure of youth to the causes which give rise to the habit of intemperance; and a broad field of philanthropy opens itself, to any one who will plainly point out these causes and the means of avoiding them.

As one of the most obvious and powerful causes in creating intemperance, is the influence of an arbitrary rule of fashion and a mistaken hospitality,—so, it is believed that the subverting of this rule, and correcting this mistake, would greatly tend to preserve the temperate part of the community from their most frequent temptation. Let all-powerful *fashion* decide that it is not *genteel*, that it is *vulgar*, to offer spirits to a guest or to accept them when offered, and the cause of temperance will be most essentially promoted. The caprice of fashionable taste can do more towards altering the habits of mankind, than the soundest precepts of the medical art; and it is incumbent upon those, whose example influences the reigning mode, to exercise that influence in behalf of temperance and health. The fickle goddess of Fashion has much to answer for in injuring the health of her votaries, by preposterous customs and modes of dress, but she will deserve to have half her sins forgiven her, if she will but decree that the habit of drinking spirits is odious and ungenteel.

Every physician must have seen how readily persons who are fond of drink, are disposed to assign their physician's orders as an excuse for their indulgence. And although it is undoubtedly true, that the prescriptions of

physicians have sometimes led their patients to the practice of using strong drink, they are still oftener made use of, as a plea, by those who seek an excuse for doing what they know to be wrong. It is therefore proper, in ordering ardent spirits, for physicians to be precise and definite in their directions as to quantity. I cannot but think there has been a want of caution among medical men in recommending spirits, by themselves, or as a component part of the medicines directed for their patients. It is not often that such prescriptions are indispensable, although, no doubt, they are often convenient, and it cannot be denied that alcohol is an important medicine ; but the list of tonic and stimulant remedies is so extensive, as to afford a substitute for alcohol in almost every instance. And when intoxicating liquors *are* necessary, the fermented liquors, with very few exceptions, afford much the best kind of stimulus.* There is one disease, of great danger, the treatment of which is sometimes successfully conducted by administering very large quantities of ardent spirit, as the sole remedy. The disease of which I speak is tetanus or locked jaw. A perpetual state of ebriety during the continuance of this affection, is very powerful in its relaxing effects, and has sometimes carried off the disease when opium has failed, or could not be borne. But of several successful cases which I have known of the treatment of this disease by ardent spirit, *I have never known an instance* where an *unconquerable* thirst for strong drink has not been the result. That patient has little to thank his physician for, who has saved his life upon such terms as these.

* There can be no greater error committed than that of allowing a wet-nurse to increase her milk by the use of spirits. The quantity of secretion is augmented without a proper quantity of the material being furnished from whence to derive it ; and consequently the quality is injured as much as the quantity is increased.

While there is much encouragement for the friends of temperance to continue their exertions to persuade the temperate to remain so, and to diminish the examples and inducements which custom is offering to the beginner in tippling, who will venture to say the same of the efforts made to *reclaim* the intemperate? A reformed drunkard, I mean one confirmed in his reformation, is a real prodigy. Nevertheless, as there are such cases well authenticated, and some among men of high standing and most estimable character, we are not to set down intemperance as an incurable disease. Let me glance, then, at the means we possess to destroy the habit and remove its effects. And here let me premise, that the craving for drink is not a bodily disease, beyond the control of the mind. If it were so, God forbid that those who suffer under his painful allotments, should also suffer the loss of our good opinion. But there are no such irresistible longings, until after the habit has become established by indulgence. The means of curing intemperance are moral and physical; of which the former are more lasting in their effects than the latter, but unfortunately, they are less frequently brought to bear upon the patient. For the state of ebriety, and of habitual distemperature of the mind induced by hard drinking, precludes in a great degree the operation of moral causes, by brutalizing the mind and rendering it insensible to them. Hence it becomes necessary that both these classes of means should be adopted in the treatment. Whenever a respite is gained by *physical* remedies or by any accident or injury occurring, the *moral sense* should be powerfully awakened to resolve to shake off the slavery of habit. Instances have occurred, and some within my knowledge, in which strong religious impressions, producing painful convictions of

misconduct, and sincere resolutions of amendment, have been followed by an entire and permanent change of character from intemperance to sobriety.

The physical means of curing intemperance have never obtained a high degree of confidence with medical men. However a man may be cured or relieved from the consequences of intemperance, by the skill of his physician, while he is too much alarmed and too feeble to disobey the orders of that physician, it must be his own firmness and self-control which alone can prevent a relapse. Consequently, most experienced physicians are slow to *believe* in the reformation of a drunkard. There is, however, a vast importance attached to the use of physical means, when we consider, that it is by these alone, in most cases, that we can procure a respite from a practice, which, by enslaving the intellect, precludes all opportunity for the exercise of the moral sense. In the breaking up of any habit, and especially that of intemperance, the first step is the difficult one.

To cure a *fit* of intemperance it is generally sufficient to procure vomiting, and the sooner this is done the better. In an instant the pain of the head, and ringing of the ears, and oppression of the stomach are relieved, and a disposition to sleep ensues. The muscular ability and the power of locomotion return more slowly, and the accelerated circulation, and impaired nervous energy, regain their natural state after a still longer time.

But it is unfortunately true that the *habit* of intemperance lessens the suffering of a *fit* of intemperance, and therefore the means to be used to cure the initiated drunkard, need to be of a much more powerful nature, as well as much longer continued, than those which may avail in treating the novitiate.

The great and most important principle to be kept in

view, in this treatment, is, to produce *entire and perfect disgust* towards that which has been considered the favorite liquor. I cannot forbear to introduce the following instance, the most complete that can be imagined, of the extreme disgust which the stomach can be made to feel towards the cause of its torture in a debauch. It is from the very curious memoirs of the Marshal Bassompierre, a French courtier of the 17th century:—

“I was forced then,” says he, “to stay that day to dinner, for which I suffered severely. For, to make me drunk, they put brandy into my wine, though they declared they had not, and that it was only a wine of Leipeng which was very strong and heady. I had no sooner drank ten or twelve glasses, than I lost all consciousness, and fell into such a lethargy, that they were obliged to bleed me several times, and to cup me and to tie garters round my legs and arms. I remained five days in this state, and lost the taste for wine so completely, that I was more than two years not only without being able to drink any, but even without being able to smell it without shuddering.” I believe that from the principle here alluded to, that of creating an abhorrence on the part of the inebriate towards his accustomed stimulus, is derived all the efficacy of the empirical remedies for drunkenness.*

The investigations of the committees appointed by the New York and Philadelphia Medical Societies, have

* One of the most confirmed drunkards that ever came under my notice was the wife of an industrious operative,—an emigrant from Europe. Her appetite for alcohol was so strong, she was willing to take it, whatever might be its accompaniment. She readily consented to try a “course” of Chambers’ medicine. Her husband reported to me from time to time, its effects; and after she had taken two quarts of gin, medicated with the patent cure for intemperance, as much vomiting was produced as I thought it prudent for her to undergo. The effect of the experiment was a degree of disgust towards spirituous liquor for a short time only, as had previously been the effect of an unusual debauch,—and she soon relapsed into her degrading propensities. Her husband characterized the effect of the remedy by telling me that he thought it about equal to that of a “pretty considerable drunk.”

abundantly proved that these vaunted nostrums are nothing more than vomits,—and that the emetic-principle in them is tartar emetic. As far as my experience goes, this substance alone, which, from its insipidity can be readily introduced into the accustomed liquor, affords us all the properties we can desire, in an emetic; and, with judicious and cautious management, for it is too powerful to be indiscriminately trusted to friends and domestics,* may be made an effective instrument in rendering the drink of the inebriate disgusting. Mr. Fournier, a French writer of merit, relates two instances in which he was consulted for women who had given themselves up to intemperance. “I caused,” says he, “an emetic to be put into the spirituous drink they were accustomed to use. The most cruel retchings soon began to disturb their enjoyment. They changed their liquor-merchant, but precautions being taken, the emetic always adroitly introduced into the drink, produced its salutary effect. These females, disgusted and exhausted by these immoderate vomitings, finally renounced a gratification which brought with it so severe a punishment.”

Other remedies have been successfully used, but on the same general principle, of fixing in the mind of the tippler a strong antipathy to his formerly beloved drink.

A *fit* of intemperance concerns, mainly, the indiscreet individual who subjects himself to its penalties; but the *habit* of intemperance is fraught with the most woful

* The following case is illustrative of the danger of leaving the employment of tartarized antimony with indiscreet persons. A man of fortune, excessively addicted to ebriety, occasionally became, during his drinking bouts, outrageously noisy and offensive. Upon one of these occasions his domestics drugged his wine with tartarized antimony. The consequence was what they chose to call a fit of cholera morbus. It was with some difficulty that this disease was subdued, and it was quite evident that the operation of the emetic, carried a little further, would have extinguished life.

consequences to society at large. In its train, follows all the long catalogue of crimes and unutterable abominations. The records of our prisons and houses of correction will show, that these receptacles are peopled by intemperance. These records, however, show us but a small part of the crimes originated by this parent and prolific vice.

The gloom and self-abhorrence, which its victims suffer in their sober moments, are among the most common causes of self-destruction. Hence the increase of drunkenness and suicide generally proceed together, with equal pace. A Prussian physician* has made some interesting calculations on this subject, with regard to the capital of Prussia. He states, that, from 1758 to 1822, the increase of suicidal deaths has been, at Berlin, from about one in two thousand deaths, to about one in a hundred! To account for this appalling increase, he considers drunkenness as one of the prime causes. Many suicides are insane persons, and it appears that nearly a third of the cases of insanity, in Berlin, arise from excessive drinking. It appears, too, that owing chiefly to the increase of this vice, the proportion of cases of insanity, to the general diseased population, is rapidly increasing. Even since 1819, when it was 1 in 25, it increased progressively to 1822, when it had become 1 in 22. Such being the fact, it is natural to expect that a large proportion of suicides originate from the same cause. Accordingly, between 1812 and 1821, inclusive, the cases of suicide from drunkenness, formed a fourth part of the whole cases of suicide. Even this immense proportion, however, probably does not represent the actual fact; for many cases put down under the heads of discontent in marriage, bankruptcy and

* Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Journal, Vol. 26.

insanity, have arisen from the same cause. The vice of drinking, has evidently risen to a great height in this populous city, as appears by the number of spirit shops in relation to the private dwellings and inhabitants. In 1822, there were 1525 spirit shops and taverns of the denomination frequented by the lower orders—being about 1 to every 4 dwelling houses! The population of Berlin that year was 200,000; so that each shop was supported on an average by 130 persons. A considerable proportion must be deducted from this 130, on account of sickness and infancy, and the remainder must consume a great quantity of spirituous liquor, for the trade of these tavern-keepers is said to be a thriving one.

When I first became acquainted with these details, I congratulated myself and my countrymen that we belonged to the new world and not to the old, and I turned for relief from the contemplation of so much misery, to the medical statistics of our own country. But I was chagrined and dismayed at finding that there is no large city in the United States, which, judged from the same facts, appears to be so temperate as the capital of Prussia! In the city of New York, with the same population, viz. of 200,000, there are 3300 dram shops, or one to 60 persons. In Philadelphia and its suburbs, with a population of 159,480, there are 1239 dram shops, or one to 129 persons. And in the moral metropolis of the land of steady habits, with a population of 64,000, the number of persons licensed to retail spirits, in 1827, was 562, or one for 112 inhabitants.* But here I shall be warned that I ought not to traduce our country—but the truth is more to be revered than the fame of any country. I shall be told, that we must not stigmatize our land, as a nation of drunkards. Let it rather be said that we have

* New York Observer, Feb. 21st, 1829.

had self-examination and moral courage enough to discern our faults, and resolution enough to amend them. The injudicious excusing of the errors in our national habits, and a blindness to our national faults, is perhaps with too much justice charged against us, and is a sentiment too near akin to the prejudice of modern British tourists, by their misnamed loyalty, and which is not far removed from that conceit, which the wise man pronounces to be greater than that of seven men that can render a reason.

If the History of Prisons gives us a condensed view of the *effects* of Intemperance, it likewise furnishes us with a series of most instructive facts, upon a point of immense consequence, in the *treatment* of the intemperate. It has been made a question, whether a sudden abstraction of all stimuli was not injurious or dangerous to the intemperate. From some experience with the votaries of Bacchus, I can truly avouch, that I know of no harm, beyond a temporary debility and nervousness, a condition vulgarly denominated the horrors, and which lasts but a few days, which results from strictly refusing a drunkard his accustomed draught. But the following facts which I extract from the reports of the Prison Discipline Society of Boston, a Society whose object and whose efforts do equal honor to their heads and their hearts, would seem to carry with them perfect conviction, and set the question at rest forever. "In the state prison at Thomaston, Maine, there have been admitted, up to August, 1826, 354 convicts, and at the time of the report there were 82 in prison. The health of the prison has been remarkable, not one having died from a natural cause, since the prison was organized. An important experiment has been made in this prison of the effect on health of cutting off habitual drunkards, at once, from

the use of spirituous liquors, in any form, and confining them to cold water. It has been found invariably beneficial. They soon renew their youth; and a more hale, healthy, muscular body of men cannot be found in prison or out of prison, than the cold water convicts in the quarry of the Maine prison. It is an experiment also, to show that hard labor can be performed, on good food and cold water. As an evidence of this, it is only necessary to see those men handle rocks. The state prison in Concord, New Hampshire, has received 257 convicts, up to September, 1825. Their health has been good, exceeding that of the county at large. The same valuable experiment has been made, as in Maine, concerning the effect of cutting off drunkards from the use of ardent spirits, and with the same results. The state prison at Windsor, Vt. had received, up to September, 1825, 534 convicts, whose health had been remarkably good. The same valuable experiment has been made as in Maine and New Hampshire, of the cutting off habitual drunkards from the use of ardent spirits, and with the same delightful results, in regard to health. The subjects of such treatment renew their youth directly. The state prison at Sing Sing, in New York, is calculated, when completed, to receive 800 convicts. At the time of the report, it contained 250, whose health had been very good. The same valuable experiment on temperance, which has been mentioned in speaking of other prisons, has been tried at Sing Sing. The men neither suffer, nor die, from abstinence, though they have been formerly intemperate. Nor is there any want of ability to work hard, all the time, upon wholesome food and good water. At the state prison in Auburn, New York, the average number of convicts is rising 400. Their good health is clearly proved by the

average number, four and a fraction, which is found in the hospital; and the proportionate number of deaths, which is 2 per cent. The same important experiment has here been made. Mr. Powers, the keeper, says, the convicts are strictly prohibited the use of ardent spirits and tobacco, except as medicine; and contrary to a very common, but fallacious notion, that the confirmed drunkard cannot break off at once, from the use of spirits, without danger to his health, it has been found, invariably, that the most besotted drunkards have never suffered in their health, from that cause, but almost as uniformly, their health has been improved. They appear to be very uneasy and somewhat lost, for a few days, and with rather poor appetites; after which, they eat heartily and improve in health and appearance."

With all this evidence before him, need the fear of danger deter the most timid physician from recommending total abstinence to a drunkard?

Nor is ardent spirit more necessary to be given those persons who are laboring under delirium tremens; and, as far as my observation goes, is seldom called for by the patients themselves. On the contrary, this disease seems to require for its treatment, a total abstraction of all stimulants,—of food, light, wine, company, and, in short, of any thing which can act upon the senses. Many persons have recovered from an attack of this disease, merely by being shut up in a dark lobby and kept upon bread and water.

In fact, it does not appear from any evidence which has come to my knowledge, that it is attended with any serious hazard to the health of the habitually intemperate, to deprive them, at once and entirely, of their accustomed liquor. The Gordian knot of our habitual indulgences must be resolutely cut at a blow; to unloose it, is almost always impossible.

Possibly in the case of very aged people who indulge too freely in drink, and who cannot take food, without first highly stimulating the stomach with ardent spirit, the degree of debility which ensues upon relinquishing an habitual stimulus, might be attended with danger, but such a case I have never yet seen.*

As there is the greatest danger that the reclaimed inebriate will relapse into his former habits, upon all such, a system of entire abstinence from all intoxicating liquors should be strictly enjoined. A single indulgence, and the evil propensity is wont to return in all its former imperiousness. I knew a reformed drunkard, who, after a year's abstinence, during which his business, hopes and prospects were revived, being prevailed upon to taste a glass of wine, upon thanksgiving day, immediately surrendered himself to the remorseless enemy of his health and happiness. In those cases of reformation which take place under the care of a physician, it is important, therefore, that the patient be apprized of the means of establishing his recovery. For

* I am aware that in the foregoing opinion I do not agree with some persons, whose authority is entitled to great respect. In particular, the ingenious author of the *Anatomy of Drunkenness*, (Dr. Robert Macnish,) recommends a gradual reduction of the potations of the spirit drinker; and, with remarkable inconsistency, allows that immediate abandonment of drinking may properly take place where there is any organic disease, as of the liver, stomach, &c.; and yet insists that those drunkards, who have no particular disease, require to be deprived of the bottle by degrees. My own experience, and the observations of those in whom I have the greatest confidence, lead me to a totally different opinion; and except in the possible case of aged people, as I have before mentioned, I am not prepared to admit an exception to the propriety of immediate and total abstinence. It is a very common error to suppose that delirium tremens, which usually commences three or four days after the occurrence of an accident, or an attack of an acute disease, is the *consequence* of the abstinence recommended and usually enforced at that time. It is with the brain and nerves as with the other organs of the body, changes of structure and properties are gradually wrought in them, which are scarcely perceivable in a state of health,—and become developed on the first occasion of this state being seriously interrupted. The nervous system of habitual drunkards is constantly predisposed to irregular action, and any cause operating permanently to excite this system, may bring on the disease in question.

it is the duty of a liberal physician, as much to inform his patient of what will prevent disease, as of what will cure it. I beg not to be misinterpreted. I am no advocate for physicians usurping the functions of the sacred desk, and wielding the sanctions of an eternal world. Their *business* is with the *body*, and the causes which act upon it, to produce health and disease; and their benevolence should lead them to promulgate a knowledge of the means of preserving, as well as of restoring health. In them, who know so well the evils of intemperance, a time-serving and accommodating way of dealing with the subject, is cowardly and culpable. They ought honestly, at proper times and places, to state plainly to those who apply to them for advice, the consequences of their habits upon their *corporeal* system; and if this is kindly and faithfully done, it will need no *moralizing* to give these lessons their full effect upon the *mind* and character. I am here tempted to introduce a pertinent anecdote of the eminent and ingenious but eccentric Mr. Abernethy. He once had a wealthy patient, who was alarmingly ill with disorder of the stomach and liver, from improper indulgences at the table. Mr. Abernethy labored hard to persuade him to adopt an abstemious mode of living, and having succeeded, the man recovered his health in an astonishing manner. "About three months afterwards," says Mr. Abernethy, "he asked me to dine with him. I went, and I saw him at his old tricks, stuffing enormously. After dinner we walked into the garden. He was a merchant. And in the course of our walk I said to him, Pray, sir, what would you think of a man, who from nothing, had raised a small capital, and who might, if he chose, go on increasing that, into an immense fortune, but who did not choose to go on, and squandered that

capital away; what would you think of him?" "Why," said he, "I should say he was a fool." Then said I, what one may think of wealth, another may think of health, and "THOU art the man."

There at length appears to be a prospect that mankind may be made to regard ardent spirit in its true character. We look upon opium and ether and other inebriating and stupifying drugs as powerful agents to be dealt out in minute doses, with scrupulous accuracy, by the hands of the skilful, as remedies for our diseases. And I think there is some reason to hope, that with a great portion of the temperate, ardent spirit will be handled as it ought to be, with the same *caution*. And this is not so great a sacrifice for temperate men to make as has often been made for a less important reason. When these States were in a condition of colonial dependence, it was deemed an act of patriotism to give up darling luxuries, the consumption of which was thought to favor the unreasonable claims of Great Britain. It needs but a tithe of that spirit which induced our grandmothers to relinquish the innocent and grateful and almost indispensable infusion of "China's fragrant herb," to banish alcohol, in all its forms, from the houses of all true lovers of their country and their country's true prosperity and happiness. If colonial dependence, even with chartered rights, was not to be endured, surely we cannot tolerate the thralldom of a custom which exerts unconditional tyranny over its votaries.

But is not ardent spirit useful in cases of great fatigue, to enable men to endure hardship, suffering, and pain? I honestly and truly believe that in such cases it will do more harm than good. No doubt, it renders men insensible to suffering for a time, and in so doing defeats the wise provision of nature which ordained bodily pain

to warn us of the approach of danger. And the bodies of men are much more likely to meet with disaster when this watchful sentinel is quieted by stimulus, and an insensibility to pain is created. Besides, just in proportion to any given excitement, is the corresponding collapse, and as the balance of accounts is struck every few hours, I believe no man will find himself ultimately a gainer by the ability to undergo suffering, which is derived from drinking spirits.

In our efforts to dissuade men from the abuse of intoxicating drinks, we ought to be on our guard lest an overstrained zeal should carry us to a length which might well excite a suspicion of the fairness of our judgment, in estimating the effects of these drinks. Our arguments should be directed against *excess*, and if we decry the moderate use of spirits, it should be, principally, because this will probably lead to excess.

It cannot be denied that men of confirmed health and industrious habits, in the middle age of life, have sometimes made a daily use of a very moderate quantity of spirits, without showing any appearance of injury therefrom. But, at the same time, it would be easy to prove they derive no possible advantage from the practice, and that they would be at least as well without it.

It is surely becoming that we should be *temperate* in our manner of advocating *temperance*. Indiscreet zeal may, and often does, injure the best of causes. A good cause does not need the support of falsehood and misrepresentation. The *truth* in this affair is frightful enough. Let men be told the truth and let them govern themselves accordingly. Let us guard against exaggeration and mistatement. I fear this has not always been done.

I would have the argument against intemperance

drawn from the vast sums expended in purchasing spirits, fairly stated. The aggregate of these sums is immense, and a large part is wrung from the toil and sweat of the laboring classes. The expenditure impoverishes these individuals, but is not, of *itself* a *pecuniary* loss to the nation. The money circulates, as in other purchases, among merchants, and traders, and manufacturers. The expenditure of so vast a sum may be a gain to those persons, although it is more than counterbalanced by the loss which they, as a part of community, sustain in the destruction of life, health, and labor, which would otherwise have gone to increase the public wealth. In fact it is preposterous to estimate in *money*, the misery caused by intemperance. It can be estimated only in the loss of human happiness in the families and societies where this vice commits its ravages. I will not plead to have one feature softened in the deformed and bloated picture of drunkenness. But I cannot admit that a majority of the nation are hard drinkers, and that the prosperity of the country is at an end, and our liberties irrecoverably lost, if a single trace of intemperance can be found amongst us.

Nor is there anything worthy of imitation in the manner of those who would *compel* men to give up their indulgences, and *denounce* them if they do not accede to the conditions prescribed for them. If the force of argument, and of our own example, fail of convincing, we have no other means of amending them.

Especially, would I caution those who urge the relinquishment of ardent spirits, not to interfere with the fixed habits of old age, when these habits do not pass the bounds of strict sobriety. We should seldom succeed in altering these habits; and, if we did, we should still more seldom improve the happiness of the subjects;

and invariably should we excite, against the cause of temperance, the prejudice and ill will of those whom we would wish to conciliate.

Nor do I believe there is wisdom in forming our plans of reform upon chimerical notions of perfectibility. Men will never consent to relinquish all the luxuries of life, and confine themselves to the necessities. We cannot expect them to relinquish all their indulgences, even if these are known to shorten the period of their existence. Hence it becomes an important question, whether, in the present state of society, the use of wine, and other fermented liquors, as a substitute for spirits, ought to be encouraged.

In my opinions on this subject, I aver I do not concur with many excellent and judicious friends of temperance. But many considerations induce me to accord with the affirmative of this question. It is a common remark that the inhabitants of those countries in which the vine grows readily, are almost uniformly temperate.* They manufacture spirits, but seldom taste them; and drunkenness, from any cause, is very little known among them. This can only be attributed to the plenty and cheapness of the weak kinds of wine; for, in respect to other vices, the moral sense of these people, is often fitted to a lower standard than that of their less temperate neighbors. To be sure, excess in drinking those liquors will produce the same intoxication and brutal stupefaction as follow the abuse of spirits. But it is abundantly evident that even the excessive use of

* Indeed intemperance may claim to be a northern vice. In Stockholm, according to Dr. F. B. Hawkins, as well as at Berlin, a large share of the mortality is to be ascribed to drunkenness. In a recent year the deaths outnumbered the births by 1439, a very unnatural state of things among an industrious people. The author above mentioned states on authority, that the immoderate use of brandy, and other distilled spirits, destroys the happiness and prosperity of Sweden, in a much greater degree than any war has ever done.

wine and other fermented liquors, does not bring on so speedily, nor nearly to so great a degree, the diseases of intemperance, as does the use of spirits. The great bulk of fermented liquor, and the longer time they require to inebriate, render them less convenient for the purpose of secret dram-drinking—the confirmed sot's highest enjoyment. It is no small consideration that most of the fermented liquors are capable of being prepared or imitated, in the families of persons in moderate circumstances, and thereby the inducement to the intemperate is less strong, to escape from the wholesome restraint of domestic watchfulness. Very palatable wines, from our native fruits, may be manufactured at home. At home! These are talismanic words, and possess a charm almost sufficient to draw the devotee of Bacchus from the haunts of dissipation, to the quiet enjoyment of fireside pleasures, and the endearments of the family circle.

The vine has been considered in all countries where it grows as among the richest bounties of Providence. It is the symbol of plenty, and the sacred writings abound in passages in which the juice of the grape is considered among the articles of ordinary food. It is the tarrying long at the wine cup, which receives the censure of the sacred moralists.

I cannot think our Saviour would have wrought a miracle to furnish wine for an occasion of festivity, at which he was a guest, if the occasional and moderate use of it were so reprehensible. For my own part, I should consider an increased attention to the cultivation of orchards and vineyards, as a happy harbinger of the increase of temperance in this country. It is worthy of remark, that the cultivation of the vine was an object of solicitude to the pious and temperate pilgrims of New

England; and in the very first descriptions of the country which they wrote, they are careful to inform us that several varieties of grapes grow here abundantly.

Notwithstanding the extent to which I have already prolonged these remarks, I cannot forbear to notice one objection, and the principal one, which is brought against the allowing of fermented liquors, by those who deprecate the use of distilled spirits. It is said, we call upon the laborious classes to sacrifice what they esteem an enjoyment, and for which they have no substitute, while we allow the rich their expensive wines. That the rich may well decry the use of spirits, while they console themselves with other luxuries, and, in this manner,

“Compound for sins they are inclin’d to,
By shunning those they have no mind to.”

“Let the rich give up their drink,” say they, “and we will give up ours.” But surely, this objection is more specious than real. Were the abject and suffering peasantry of some other countries, to reason in this manner, and to plead that they sought the intoxicating cup to drown in forgetfulness the misery of their condition, there would be more weight in their appeal. But thanks to a munificent Providence, he has not so disproportionately allotted human happiness in this country. There is no class of persons in New England, who can justly hold this language. The bare necessities of life are, and for a long time will be, within the reach of every man’s labor, a labor which gives the coarser aliment of the poor a relish which belongs not to the more costly viands of the rich. But, after all, what is gained by yielding to such an appeal? Suppose wine discarded from daily use by the rich, does not the argument still remain in its full force? “The rich have more of the

comforts of life," say the objectors, "they have better shelter and better food and clothing, they can afford to relinquish one luxury, but do not ask of us to abandon our only one. Let them place themselves in our situation and they will excuse our conduct. The truth is, this objection is, at best, a mere quibble. Distilled and fermented liquors do not belong to the same family. The difference between them is, the excessive use of the latter is injurious, and any use of the former is pernicious.

It must be obvious to every one that within two years a most gratifying change has begun to take place in public opinion in regard to the subjects we have been considering. Under the auspices, and in a considerable degree owing to the efforts of the American Temperance Society, the consumption of ardent spirit, in Massachusetts, has greatly diminished; and it is obvious to medical men and others, that the diseases of intemperance have diminished also. It is for the purpose of forwarding this salutary reformation, that several associations have been formed in this place, at whose invitation I have thus exercised the patience of this assembly, in the humble hope of exciting some degree of public attention to the subject. This is a cause in which all the friends of man can unite. It *ought* not to be confined to any one society or party or denomination. It is a public affair, and in this town, and every other, recommends itself to municipal and public protection. Surely no sectarian feeling need to prevent co-operation. And men of all religions and of no religion, if they are the friends of peace and good order, will join to promote the cause of Temperance. My confident belief is, that this result can best be attained by the modern plan of temperance associations, the fundamental principle of which is, waiving the discussion as to

the proper character of other intoxicating drink, to consider ardent spirit, as an article not adapted to common use, and which ought only to be prescribed for sickness under the orders of judicious physicians. The operation of these associations is the most simple and effectual that can well be imagined. They *compel* no man, they *awe* no man by the constraint of public opinion; but they serve to influence the reigning mode, in the most gradual manner, and to operate on the intemperate by the force of example. But their best effects are yet to come.

For by banishing distilled spirits from the families of the temperate, a generation will be coming forward, who will not become familiar with the use of this pernicious stimulant in childhood and youth, and their habits of temperance will become confirmed and proof against evil example, if any such be found. Let us, then, agree to dispense with ardent spirit at our meals and at our visits—discard it from our workshops—eject it from our sideboards and our closets—let us give it a bad name—let us label it poison, and consign it, with opium and arsenic and other poisons, to the medicine chest and the apothecaries' shop, to be called out only by the prescription of the physician.

